DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 286 123 CG 020 206

TITLE	State Plan for the Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect.
INSTITUTION	North Carolina State Dept. of Public Instruction, Raleigh.
PUB DATE	Nov 86
NOTE	25p.
PUB TYPE	Reports - General (140)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	Adolescents; *Child Abuse; *Child Neglect; Children; *Prevention; *Program Development; *State Legislation; *State Programs
IDENTIFIERS	*North Carolina

ABSTRACT

This document provides the state of North Carolina with a blueprint for program development, training, and research in the area of child abuse prevention intended to strengthen community programs and families statewide. The problem of child abuse is presented in the first section of the report. The next section identifies barriers which may be significant factors in the implementation of a comprehensive child abuse prevention program. Lack of coordination by service providers, lack of training in the area of child abuse and neglect among professionals who work with children, family life education in the schools, teacher preparation for teaching family life education, availability of affordable day care, inadequate public/private collaboration, public awareness of child abuse, and attitudes toward discipline are considered. The major part of the report concentrates on five priority areas for North Carolina in the prevention of child abuse identified by the State Board of Education. Separate sections are included on each of the five priorities: (1) prevention programs; (2) training and education; (3) interagency cooperation and public-private collaboration; (4) evaluation and research; and (5) public awareness. Recommendations for legislative and administrative action are included and a list of references and resources is provided. (NB)

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STATE PLAN
Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect

REQUIRED BY G.S. 110-147

NORTH CAROLINA DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC INSTRUCTION

NOVEMBER, 1986

CG 020206

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PREFACE

The children of North Carolina are our State's most valuable resource. While our deep commitment to their education focuses on intellectual growth, it cannot be separated from every other aspect of each child's development. The prevention of child abuse and neglect has been recognized as a priority by our legislature in setting up the Children's Trust Fund and by our State Board of Education in its ongoing child abuse prevention efforts. Children need a safe, healthy, nurturing family environment to realize their full potential. Families need supportive community programs and services to undertake the difficult task of raising children. This State Plan for the Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect represents another milestone in our progress toward enhancing the quality of life for all our children.

A. Craig Phillips
State Superintendent of Public Instruction

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INTRODUCTION

North Carolina is unique in the relationship that exists between public education and child abuse prevention efforts. In 1980 the Department of Public Instruction established the Office of Child Abuse Prevention within the state agency, recognizing that educators are in a significant position in their relationship to children and access to families. The State Board of Education has a long standing commitment to the healthy social, intellectual, physical and emotional development of children. In 1983, the General Assembly adopted G. S. 110-147 making child abuse and neglect prevention a priority for this State and establishing the Children's Trust Fund as a means to that end.

Along with having the responsibility for administration of the Fund, the State Board of Education also has the mandate to develop a State Plan for the Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect by January 1, 1987, to be submitted to the Governor, the President of the Senate and the Speaker of the House. This document will provide a blueprint for program development, training and research to strengthen community programs and families statewide.

STATEMENT OF PROBLEM

Child abuse continues to be a problem of epidemic proportions in the State of North Carolina and in the nation. In one year more than 28,000 children were reported as abused or neglected in North Carolina, according to the North Carolina Center for Health Statistics. Research from the National Center for Child Abuse and Neglect indicates that one in four girls and one in seven boys will be sexually abused before they reach the age of 18. One quarter of the victims of sexual abuse are five years old or younger.

The Governor's Commission on Child Victimization made a comprehensive study of the problem of child victimization beginning in the fall of 1985. Over the course of a year it conducted a statewide forum of public hearings to gather testimony from a broad base of citizens. Of all the possible components of this problem, child abuse, both physical and sexual, emerged as the most pressing issue. Child abuse became a priority and dominated the Commission's 30 recommendations to the Governor in its September 1986 report.

The traumatic effects of physical, sexual and emotional abuse and neglect have a profound impact on normal development. Current research has established that most abuse is not a one time event but a way of life for victims. It leads to serious emotional and behavioral problems. Frequently, adolescent victims come to agency attention as juvenile delinquents, expectant parents, substance abusers, dropouts, runaways or attempted suicides. Investigation of these situations often indicates a history of child maltreatment. Further, it has become clear that child abuse is passed on from generation to generation.

Abused children become abusive parents and this legacy will continue until it is effectively interrupted.

If the statistics are alarming, the cost of child abuse is equally staggering both in dollars expended and loss of human potential. The North Carolina State Child Protective Service budget alone is in excess of $10 million annually. Related, long-term costs of child abuse can only be estimated and include costs of foster care, judicial system costs, juvenile rehabilitation and adult correctional system costs, drug rehabilitation and mental health service costs.

Traditionally, child abuse and neglect services emphasized identification of victims and intervention in the form of treatment, or punishment for the abuser. Energy and resources were mobilized after the fact to keep abuse or neglect from recurring in already troubled families. As a result, professionals have gathered information about the causes of abuse as well as effective ways to respond. Now the focus has broadened from identification and intervention to encompass prevention strategies. Early intervention involves the identification of high risk families who have evidenced dysfunction so that specific resources can be channeled to meet their needs. However, it is recognized that a comprehensive plan will have to place particular emphasis on primary prevention as well if it is to have an impact on the reduction of child abuse and neglect. Approaches which emphasize education and broad family support services throughout a community can be implemented so primary prevention takes place. It was with this knowledge and in this spirit that the General Assembly passed G. S. 110-147 in 1983, making the prevention of child abuse and neglect a priority in the State of North Carolina and establishing the Children's Trust Fund as a means to that end.

BARRIERS

The purpose of identifying barriers is to recognize them as significant factors in the implementation of a comprehensive child abuse prevention program. It is hoped that with commitment and leadership, these impediments will be overcome.

- Lack of opportunity for coordination among the Health, Human Services, Law Enforcement, Education and Judicial systems in providing services to children.

- Lack of adequate training in the area of child abuse and neglect among professionals who work with children.

- Low priority afforded to family life education in the public school system.

- Inadequate teacher preparation for Family Life instruction.

- Limited availability of affordable day care statewide.

- Inadequate public/private collaboration in the prevention of child abuse.

- Lack of public awareness of the incidence of child abuse and the responsibility of every citizen to report suspected incidents.

- Attitudes that are accepting of a physical means of disciplining children.

- Legislation that restricts local school districts from prohibiting corporal punishment.

- Inadequate system for assuring that all families can access support services easily.

CHILD ABUSE PREVENTION PRIORITIES FOR THE STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA

In formulating priorities for the development of the State Plan, the Department of Public Instruction has taken the following into consideration:

- Information from the Task Force on the Prevention of Family Violence, N. C. Department of Human Resources.

- Information from the Governor's Task Force on Domestic Violence, N. C. Council on Status of Women.

- The findings and recommendations of the North Carolina Governor's Commission on Child Victimization.

- North Carolina General Statutes, Chapter 110, Article 10, Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect.

- North Carolina General Statutes, Chapter 7A-543, Duty to Report Child Abuse, and 7A-550, Immunity of Persons Reporting.

- The National Committee for the Prevention of Child Abuse recommendations for developing a comprehensive approach to the prevention of child abuse.

- The child abuse prevention efforts of other states in the United States and the scope of other state plans for the prevention of child abuse.

Prevention programs are defined to be those programs and services which impact on children and families before child abuse or neglect has occurred. In developing this blueprint for comprehensive programming, the following assumptions are being made:

1) A primary concern of all prevention programs should be to strengthen the family unit in its diverse forms.

2) The development of new prevention programs may require a reordering and reallocation of existing resources.

3) The development of community support systems and interagency communication can and must be initiated in every community.

4) No single prevention program will substantially reduce the incidence of child abuse and neglect unless it is a part of a comprehensive prevention strategy that includes a number of different programs.

5) Child abuse and neglect will always demand attention; however, with appropriate prevention programs its incidence can be substantially reduced.

6) In evaluating prevention programs, we work with imperfect knowledge. Well defined assumptions that lead to clear objectives, measurable outcomes, and reasonable goals must be made in determining the value of a particular program.

Recognizing the complexity and pervasiveness of the problem of child abuse, and recognizing existing prevention efforts and initiatives by both the public and private sectors, the State Board of Education has identified the following priority areas for North Carolina in the prevention of child abuse:

- **Prevention programs**
- **Training and education**
- **Interagency cooperation/public-private collaboration**
- **Evaluation/research**
- **Public awareness**

Prevention Programs

The Department of Public Instruction supports the view that a comprehensive community plan contains varied but related programs, targeted to different populations and reflecting phases of the family life cycle. Education plays a vital role in every aspect of a comprehensive plan. Programs that show promise include prenatal programs, perinatal bonding programs, programs in interaction with infants, programs for parents of infants in need of extra services, home visitor programs, support groups, crisis care programs, child care programs, child screening and treatment programs, programs for abused children, and education for adulthood programs. Local communities can sponsor a continuum of services tailored to meet their particular needs.

Within this priority area, the following objectives are identified:

- Expand the preschool screening efforts undertaken by the Department of Public Instruction and the Division of Health Services to identify health, developmental and learning needs. Young children in need of these services are at risk for abuse and neglect. By establishing preschool screening in every school system, the identification and referral of these children will provide a primary prevention service.

- Continue to fund programs through the Children's Trust Fund that will help communities reorder existing resources to meet identified needs and develop a continuum of services within the community to support families in all phases of the family life cycle.

- Establish model programs for children who spend periods of the day without parental or adult supervision. Such programs may coordinate before and after school care, establish telephone trees, and provide lessons in personal safety.

- Establish pilot early education programs for three and four year olds. In addition to educational and socialization advantages for children, such programs relieve stresses of parenting by providing structured activities for children and involving parents in a broader school/community network.

Training Education

The area of training and education covers a broad spectrum, ranging from children's safety information, to parent education in child rearing and development, to training for professionals who work with children.

Within this priority area, the following objectives are identified:

- Establish a consortium of professionals to develop appropriate curriculum materials in child abuse and neglect issues and prevention and provide these materials to institutions of higher education for incorporation into their programs preparing health practitioners, educators, mental health professionals, child care workers, social workers, and law enforcement officers.

- Establish on-going in-service training in child abuse and neglect reporting requirements, current issues, and prevention strategies through teacher recertification courses and the Leadership Institute for Administrators.

- Fully implement family life education and personal safety education curricula in the public schools such as those prescribed in the Standard Course of Study.

- Require education and support programs for all first time parents.

- Identify goals and objectives in the Standard Course of Study which serve to prevent child abuse and neglect by reviewing the Guidance, Healthful Living, Social Studies and related curricula. Establish a consortium of professionals from various disciplines to evaluate the Standard Course of Study in regard to its Child Abuse and Neglect content and to make recommendations for revision that will integrate and supplement existing curriculum activities.

- Sponsor continuing education to emphasize alternatives to corporal punishment as effective discipline strategies, through the Leadership Institute for Administrators, recertification courses for teachers, and other staff development activities. Since educators serve as significant role models for children and the community, these programs will stress the importance of utilizing management strategies other than physical force.

Interagency Cooperation/Public-Private Collaboration

Initiatives in interagency cooperation are evident in such efforts as the Governor's Task Force on Child Victimization, the Task Force on Prevention of Family Violence, State Interagency Council for Education and Related Services, and the Interagency Agreement for Reporting Suspected Child Abuse and Neglect which exists between the Department of Public Instruction and the Department of Human Resources. The existence of these initiatives reflects the rising commitment to greater cooperation between agencies and increased coordination of services. However, in some areas, funding shortages cause gaps in service. Services also may not always be efficiently utilized because of overlapping or lack of awareness of services available. It is essential that information be shared freely and frequently if public agencies hope to provide quality comprehensive services to families.

Equally important is the role of corporate and volunteer sectors of the community on local planning committees and task forces. Private initiatives can effectively supplement services provided by public agencies.

Within this priority area are the following objectives:

- Develop a policy to ensure interagency cooperation between the Division of Health Services and the Department of Public Instruction in developing instruments for preschool screening and sharing test results.

- Maximize utilization of community resources including volunteers to support existing programs through development of materials and implementation of training programs by local community schools coordinators.

- Continue to disseminate programs funded by the Children's Trust Fund for implementation in other communities, and provide technical assistance to communities that wish to implement such programs.

- Provide assistance to "Judicial District Coordinating Councils" in their efforts to establish local child victimization networks as recommended by the Governor's Commission on Child Victimization.

- Establish in local school districts model and pilot programs utilizing the concept of support teams to assess needs of high risk students and families, provide preventive services, coordinate support, and refer to community agencies. Membership will include but not be limited to the principal, school social worker, counselor, school nurse, classroom teacher, and exceptional children's teacher. Representatives from local agencies, such as the Department of Social Services, Mental Health Center or Health Department may also be included. This model, which has been effectively implemented, requires no additional personnel and minimal commitment of staff time.

- Provide assistance to those schools and school districts interested in establishing support teams or expanding the responsibilities of existing teams to meet the needs of high risk students.

Research/Planning/Evaluation

Programs are most effective when they are based on research and when they are responsive to on-going evaluation. While a State Plan for Child Abuse Prevention is highly diverse and complex, it is important that activities are based on the most current information available, that they be subject to evaluation and that they be flexible enough to respond to the changing needs in local communities.

The following objectives are identified in this priority area:

- Develop current county-based profiles relevant to the incidence of abuse and contributing risk factors. The development of this data base management system by the Department of Public Instruction will aid in the administration of the Children's Trust Fund. The system will be designed to collect and compile information from existing agencies and sources. It will also allow changes in the profile to be observed over time, and, in the long term, indicate need within a given geographic area as well as reflect the impact of programs implemented.

- Strengthen the requirements that applicants to the Children's Trust Fund must meet in the areas of research, planning and evaluation, including the following:
    - Documentation of need within the proposed geographic impact area
    - Provision for an evaluation component that will indicate performance and outcome data by means of a clearly stated goal and measurable objective.

- Plan for dissemination of project information for implementation in other communities in the state.

- Review and revise the State Plan for Child Abuse Prevention every two years, incorporating information from the local and regional levels.

- Develop a computer data base system by 1991 which will maintain current information or research findings, programs and materials on child abuse prevention.

Public Awareness

Media has a powerful impact on public attitudes, awareness and information. Increased public awareness is an effective means of alerting citizens to their responsibility to report suspected cases of child abuse/neglect, and of mobilizing concerned citizens to become involved in child abuse prevention efforts.

The following objectives are identified:

- Develop and disseminate to media across the state a series of public service announcements, including information on child abuse and neglect, responsibility to report and resources available.

- Develop a newsletter and periodic news releases to disseminate current information on local child abuse prevention efforts.

- Build a speakers bureau with expertise in the area of child abuse and neglect and with members representing various agencies to present conferences and seminars to community and professional audiences.

- Publish an Annual Report on Children's Trust Fund Projects.

- Conduct an annual statewide conference to share research, strategies and successes of Children's Trust Fund projects to help other communities in their program planning. The local Department of Social Services, Division of Health Services, Division of Mental Health and local school districts would be among those invited to attend.

- Assist successful Children's Trust Fund projects in acquiring "exemplary program" status as conferred by the National Diffusion Network.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR LEGISLATIVE AND ADMINISTRATIVE ACTION

- Expand the Children's Trust Fund through support of legislative action that will increase funding appropriated for this purpose.

- Support legislation that will allow local school districts the option to prohibit corporal punishment.

- Develop comprehensive policy on suspected child abuse/neglect in every local school district by 1988 with appropriate procedures for reporting, recordkeeping, and follow-up.

REFERENCES/RESOURCES

Task Force on the Prevention of Family Violence
N. C. Department of Human Resources
Ruth Relos, Director
Office of Prevention
N. C. DMH/MR/SES
Suite 666, Albemarle Building
Raleigh, NC 27611

Governor's Commission on Child Victimization
Margaret Parks
N. C. Department of Crime Prevention & Public Safety
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Raleigh, NC 28144

Governor's Task Force on Domestic Violence
N. C. Council on the Status of Women
Anna Mills Wagoner, Chairperson
201 West Council Street
Salisbury, NC 28144

National Committee for the Prevention of Child Abuse
332 S. Michigan Avenue
Suite 950
Chicago, Illinois 60604-4357

The Oklahoma State Plan for the Prevention of Child Abuse
Terri Gallmeier, Director
Office of Child Abuse Prevention
Guidance Service, Oklahoma State Department of Health
1000 Northeast Tenth
Oklahoma City, OK 73152

Statewide Child Abuse Prevention Plan
Utah Chapter of the National Committee for the Prevention of Child Abuse
3707 East Gilroy Road
Salt Lake City, Utah 84109

A Comprehensive Approach for the Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect in Florida
Margie McInnes
Child Abuse and Neglect Prevention
State of Florida Department of Health & Rehabilitation Services
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Washington Coordinated Plan - Discussion Draft
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